



**Testimony Regarding the Governor's Budget Proposal on Education  
Appropriations Committee Hearing  
February 21, 2017**

Members of the Appropriations Committee, Sen. Formica, Sen. Osten, Representative Walker and Representative Ziobron, thank you for the opportunity to speak to you tonight. My name is Rev. Abraham Hernandez; I am the executive of the CT. Chapter of the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference which represents over 200 Hispanic Evangelical Churches in CT. and 44,118 Hispanic evangelical churches across our great nation.

When I heard Governor Malloy's address in the joint session on January 4<sup>th</sup> in which he stated he was seeking to adopt a new school funding formula this legislative session, I was encouraged. I was so, because our clergy believe that every child has the right to the same quality of education regardless of the zip code the student lives in and his parent's income. In meetings at some of our local Board of education meetings, our clergy have testified that Connecticut's existing funding formula system is broken and the time to address it and fix has come. We cannot afford to kick the can down the road... The current way we fund our schools now only results in our students with the greatest needs being left behind. I applaud the Governor for taking such bold steps and for showing leadership when our state and country needs education reform now more than ever.

However, I must admit that the proposed education budget falls significantly short of a comprehensive change to the funding formula by failing to include within its calculations the English Language Learners. As Northeast regional Vice President and CT. Chapter Director, I see first-hand how not adequately addressing the languages barrier can hinder those students' learning abilities. I come today, to passionately indicate that any changes to a funding formula must include ELL as a significant component in order to take into account our state's growing English Language Learners where in some school districts has doubled or tripled in the past five years. I was taken back when recently learned that our economy is changing so rapidly that by 2020, 70 percent of jobs in our state will require some form of higher education. These English Language Learners, just like any other student, need the necessary tools in order to succeed. I urge the members of the General Assembly to strongly consider a formula that addresses and encapsulates the needs of districts that are seeing growth in non-English speaking students.

As I conclude, I see that this budget also leaves schools of choice out of its equation. No school funding formula should treat public school students differently based on the school their family has chosen for their children to attend. A school funding formula should put all of our kids regardless of the school they attend first. That's what it's all about; schools really are for kids.

We cannot wait any longer to get this right. Let's develop a fair and sustainable funding formula that treats all students fairly and that is honest about the changing demographics of students and their learning needs. I encourage you all to adopt a formula that is fair, predictable and sustainable. I respectfully urge you and the legislature to not settle for what is politically easy or

to be myopic or shortsighted about this opportunity to draft transformational legislation that will give each child a level playing field to attain a quality education which in turn positions him or her to be a successful citizen. Let's us be girded with courage and fortitude to comprehensively change our system; we may not likely have another opportunity as this for another generation.

Thank you for your time,



Rev. Abraham Hernandez  
CT. Executive Director of the NHCLC

This testimony is cosponsored by the following Denominational and municipal Clergy Association Leaders that represent over 200 Hispanic Evangelical Churches in CT.

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